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# Glen Ellen: Development and Design Guidelines

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Prepared for the  
County of Sonoma

by  
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Land Use Planners

November 1990

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### *FIGURES:*

- A. GLEN ELLEN
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i. FORWARD

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The Glen Ellen Development and Design Guidelines represent revised goals, objectives, policies and design guidelines contained in previous versions of the Glen Ellen Town Plan (February 1988 and November 1988).

The Glen Ellen Town Plan was sponsored by the Glen Ellen Association and prepared in consultation with Walter Hood and Matt Taecker from the University of California, Berkeley. Members of the Glen Ellen Association Editorial Committee for the Glen Ellen Town Plan were George Ellman, Katie Scarborough and Ron Hirsh (February 1988 document) and George Ellman, Peter Ries and Charles Watson (November 1988 document).

Much gratitude and appreciation is extended to these individuals and others who were willing to devote their time and energy to develop a plan that originated from a commitment to a community and a way of life too precious to take for granted.

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## I. INTRODUCTION

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Glen Ellen, a community of about 3,000 residents, lies within a picturesque and narrow valley in southeast Sonoma County (Figure A). The town faces increasing pressure for change as it becomes more connected with the San Francisco Bay and Santa Rosa metropolitan areas, and as growth occurs in Sonoma Valley.

Glen Ellen has long been visited for its scenic charm and rural atmosphere. Tourism, to some extent, has helped to sustain the ongoing health and viability of the Glen Ellen business community. The impact of tourism however, could dramatically alter Glen Ellen's way of life and the character that makes the town attractive. The small town character of Glen Ellen promotes a sense of community and an inherent openness which recognizes personal freedoms and varied lifestyles. The maintenance and enhancement of this small town character is of utmost importance to its residents.

The design guidelines strive to maintain and enhance Glen Ellen's small town way of life, rural character and scenic charm. They encourage the use of forms and materials that are human in scale, and allow expression of Glen Ellen's sense of community.

In order to preserve and enhance that which is unique to Glen Ellen through the creation of community policies, objectives and design guidelines, it is necessary to identify what is special about Glen Ellen through a description of the town's character. The following discussion presents the Glen Ellen community as five distinct areas.

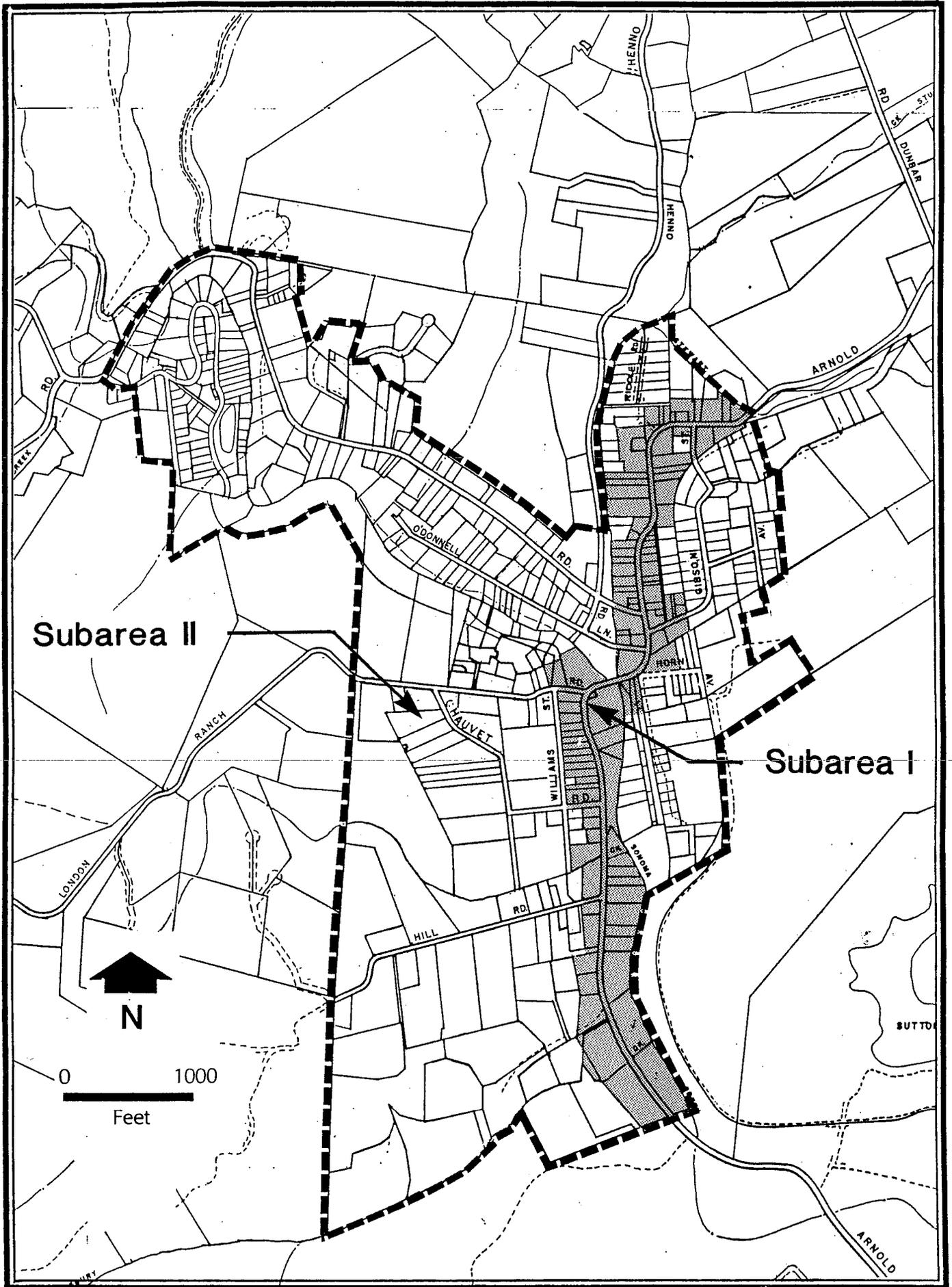


FIGURE A

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## II. AREAS OF GLEN ELLEN

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The intent of the design guidelines is to direct development in such a way that the character of Glen Ellen is enhanced and maintained. In order to better understand and thereby preserve the unique and diverse quality of Glen Ellen, the town has been separated into five specific areas along Arnold Drive between Highway 12 and the Sonoma Developmental Center. These areas are described below and shown in Figure B.

- North Entrance: In this area, the edge between higher density development in town and rural densities to Glen Ellen's north creates a distinct visual boundary. Large setbacks, inconspicuous structures, and the natural landscape characterize Arnold Drive to the northeast of Glen Ellen. Increased density, cultivated yards, prominent oak-lined ridgetops and the civic image of the firehouse mark the north entry into Glen Ellen.
- North Residential Neighborhood: The neighborhood along Arnold Drive from the northern sewer district boundary to the northernmost commercial parcels is characterized by single-family homes with cultivated yards. The houses are typically one-story in height and are small in scale, reflecting their origin as vacation bungalows. Residents have personalized many homes with sculptures and other artifacts. Riparian vegetation and ridgetops to the west are visible above rooftops.
- Town Center: Glen Ellen's town center extends along Arnold Drive between the north and south residential areas. The area is characterized by high foot traffic and pedestrian/vehicle encounters. Commercial uses generally front immediately onto Arnold Drive; behind these commercial fronts are a mix of residential and commercial uses. The varied size and style of structures contribute to the town's picturesque character. Most buildings allow views to nearby ridgetops and riparian corridors. Vegetation and open space are well integrated with buildings and act as a visual reminder of Glen Ellen's rural character.

- South Residential Neighborhood: This area extends from the commercial parcels of the town center to the creek separating residences from the Grist Mill parking lot and the Jack London Bookstore property. The area contains primarily single-family residences. Native vegetation, small building masses and steep grades contribute to this area's naturalistic character.
- South Entrance: The Sonoma Developmental Center, an old truss bridge, rural grasslands and oak groves, Sonoma Creek, and the Gristmill and Jack London Bookstore commercial areas mark the south entrance into Glen Ellen. The old truss bridge acts as the first "threshold" into Glen Ellen's historic and picturesque landscape. Grasslands immediately to the north are undeveloped with the regional park to the east of Arnold and rural residential properties to the west. The higher densities of the south residential neighborhood create the last distinctive transition in this entry experience.

**GRAPHIC BEING PREPARED**

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### III. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

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The following general goals and objectives are intended to guide design and development in the Glen Ellen area.

- A. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE GLEN ELLEN'S UNIQUE AND SMALL TOWN CHARACTER.
  - A.1. Ensure that the size, scale, and intensity of all developments are consistent and compatible with the character of Glen Ellen.
  - A.2. Require that the capacities of public services are adequate to accommodate proposed land uses and to maintain an acceptable level of service.
  - A.3. Ensure that the design and siting of structures are compatible with the scenic qualities, planned infrastructure improvements, and the local development guidelines of Glen Ellen.
  - A.4. Preserve and enhance the distinct character of the north entrance area and the north residential neighborhood.
  - A.5. Maintain the various architectural styles and the mix of commercial and residential uses characteristic of the town center.
  - A.6. Retain the single-family residential character of the south residential neighborhood.
  - A.7. Retain the picturesque quality of the south entrance area characterized by the old truss bridge and rural grasslands.

B. PROVIDE SAFE AND FUNCTIONAL CIRCULATION FOR PEDESTRIANS, BICYCLISTS AND VEHICLES.

- B.1. Minimize pedestrian-vehicular-bicycle conflicts and hazards in the design of new or upgraded developments and improvements.
- B.2. Integrate pedestrian and bicycle pathways in the design of vehicular circulation systems.
- B.3. Provide means to service commercial uses without disrupting circulation.
- B.4. Ensure safe and convenient pedestrian, vehicular and bicycling access to neighboring recreational areas.

C. MANAGE, PRESERVE AND ENHANCE GLEN ELLEN'S NATURAL QUALITIES AND RESOURCES.

- C.1. Protect and enhance creeks and riparian corridors.
- C.2. Minimize disturbance of slopes and avoid practices that contribute to erosion.

D. MAINTAIN AND ENHANCE GLEN ELLEN'S PRESENT IMAGE AND AESTHETIC CHARACTER.

- ~~D.1. Preserve and enhance significant views and vistas.~~
- D.2. Continue to use established patterns of physical development such as lot widths, setbacks, massing, relationship to the street, auxiliary structures, semi-private spaces, entrances and approaches, etc.
- D.3. Site and mass buildings in a manner which acknowledges and accentuates Glen Ellen's topographical features.
- D.4. Use forms and materials which are harmonious with the natural environment.
- D.5. Provide a subtle, understated visual sense of arrival to the town and the town center.
- D.6. Preserve and enhance important historic places, structures, and artifacts.

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## IV. TOWN DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

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### A. LAND USE

Policies listed in this section are intended to maintain and enhance Glen Ellen's small town character. These policies address land use throughout the town of Glen Ellen, and within the five distinct areas described in Section II, "Areas of Glen Ellen."

#### POLICIES ON LAND USE

1. Land use for the Glen Ellen area, including residential densities, should correspond with the General Plan Land Use Element for Sonoma Valley.
2. Use the General Plan, particularly the Open Space and Resource Conservation Elements, to guide development along scenic and riparian corridors and other designated open space areas.
3. Maintain the designated community separators between Northeast Santa Rosa and Kenwood and Glen Ellen and Agua Caliente/Boyes Hot Springs.
4. Maintain the existing sewer district boundary except where sewer service is required to correct a documented health hazard in an area adjacent to the district's sphere of influence boundary or as otherwise provided by the General Plan Public Safety Element.
5. The "Limited Commercial" land use designation is intended to accommodate retail sales and services for the daily self sufficiency of local communities. Ensure that the intensity of limited commercial development is compatible with the character of the area.
6. Continue to allow integration of residential and commercial uses along Arnold Drive consistent with the policies of the General Plan. Proposals for mixed developments should consider residential use as secondary and allowed only in conjunction with and compatible with the commercial use.

7. Encourage commercial uses and activities in the town center at street level along Arnold Drive except where in conflict with public open spaces or where development would occur within a floodplain.
8. All development shall be subject to a traffic mitigation fee to finance roadway facilities and improvements in accordance with the General Plan.
9. All development within the 100-year floodplain should conform to applicable policies of the General Plan.

## B. CIRCULATION

Access to Glen Ellen is along State Highway 12 and Arnold Drive from the north and along Arnold Drive from the south. Jack London State Park and the Glen Ellen Winery are located to the west of the town; the Sonoma Developmental Center is located to the south. Arnold Drive provides the primary access to these properties. Given its location relative to these facilities and development activity in the area, Glen Ellen has experienced increased traffic congestion, traffic safety problems, and insufficient parking. Solutions to these problems are crucial to ensure that the quality of life in the community is enhanced and not threatened. The policies and guidelines established herein are based on the following:

### Scenic value/ sense of entry:

Entry into Glen Ellen is usually from Highway 12, a State scenic highway and a designated scenic corridor in the General Plan. Arrival into town should continue to reflect the natural setting characteristic of the Sonoma Valley. Understated gateways are desirable to maintain the inconspicuous nature of the community.

### Need for bike lanes:

Glen Ellen has become popular for bicycling among both tourists and local residents. A primary goal of the local guidelines is to provide convenient access through town while minimizing vehicular-bicycle conflicts. Development of bike lanes in accordance with Figure OS-4b and policies established by the General Plan is of high priority (refer to Goal OS-8, Objective OS-8.1 and policies OS-8a through i).

### Pedestrian activity:

Glen Ellen's small town way of life encourages pedestrian activity. Due to the proximity of residences to other uses and services, safe pedestrian movement is vital to the town. A primary goal of the local guidelines is to provide for safe pedestrian movement.

## POLICIES ON CIRCULATION

1. Minimize on-street parking through project design and circulation improvements.
2. Coordinate with the Department of Public Works to stripe or place crosswalks at key intersections to ensure safe pedestrian movement, where necessary.
3. Locate bicycle and pedestrian paths to connect residential, commercial, and recreational areas in a safe and efficient manner.

## C. OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL SYSTEMS

Glen Ellen's character can be attributed largely to the town's natural setting along Sonoma Creek and its tributaries, the eastern slopes of Sonoma Mountain, and the adjacent hillsides. Living in close proximity to this natural environment contributes significantly to the quality of life for residents of Glen Ellen. The following policies seek to enhance and preserve Glen Ellen's natural environment and to provide access to it.

### POLICIES ON OPEN SPACE AND NATURAL SYSTEMS

1. Consider providing areas for passive and active recreation in commercial developments.
2. Encourage informal opportunities for recreation throughout the Glen Ellen area.
3. Provide pedestrian and bicycle access to neighboring regional and state parks where feasible.
4. On discretionary projects, encourage access to open spaces and natural areas, such as riparian corridors, where practical.
5. Retain existing riparian vegetation along stream and creek corridors in accordance with the General Plan Open Space Element.
6. On discretionary projects, use native or compatible non-native plant species to the extent possible for landscaping.
7. Minimize the disturbance of hillsides by regrading.
8. Encourage public open space areas in the design of projects in or near the town center.

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## IV. DESIGN GUIDELINES

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The following design guidelines strive to maintain and enhance Glen Ellen's small town way of life, rural character and scenic charm. They encourage the use of forms and materials that are human in scale, and allow expression of Glen Ellen's sense of community.

- Boundaries and Entrances
  1. Overhangs, awnings, balconies, porticos and entry setbacks should be used in the town center to define entrances, provide outdoor seating and protect pedestrians from sun, wind and rain.
  2. At commercial frontages, concrete pads at entries should be used to accommodate pedestrian use. Widths should be sufficient to allow for entry and safe passage. Widths should be compatible with roof overhangs, porticos and awnings to provide pleasant spaces for informal gathering and socializing.
  3. Entries and walkways in the town center should display or provide opportunities for personal expression, such as hand-lettered signs for daily specials or potted plants. Standard or conventional entry treatments should be discouraged.
  4. New fences, walls and gates made of indigenous materials such as wood and stone are recommended. Plant materials should take the place of fences where possible.
  5. Neighborly gathering should be encouraged by creating semi-private spaces such as porches, patios and gardens near the street.
  6. Entrances, driveways and property lines should not detract from the visual character of the open, natural landscape of the south residential and south entrance areas.
  7. Fencing should be permitted along private lot lines on Arnold Drive. Chain link fencing should be discouraged; ornamental fencing is preferred.
  8. Informal gates often accompanied by picket fences or hedges are common elements in the north residential area and should be encouraged.

- Public amenities

1. Benches should be provided in areas where socializing and informal gathering are encouraged, including the transit stop at Arnold Drive & Carquinez Avenue, the London Lodge Restaurant & Bar, Shone's Country Store, public open space areas, and along Sonoma Creek. Standard wood benches are preferred; ornamental benches should be discouraged.
2. Trash receptacles should be conveniently located in areas where public sitting and socializing are common. Receptacles should be simple and similar in design; wood materials are preferred.

- Walkways

1. Concrete paving should be encouraged along commercial building frontages in the town center.
2. Specialty paving such as cobblestone, brick and wood should be encouraged at public and private spaces to introduce variety. Paving should not be stylish, but should resemble existing character and form.
3. Ramps along pedestrian paths are preferred over steps in areas of steep gradient change.
4. Pedestrian walkways having slopes less than 8% are recommended.

- Bollards

1. Bollards should be installed where hazards exist with vehicular-pedestrian circulation.
2. Bollards should resemble the existing 3' wood hitch post in the town center.
3. Ornamental bollards should be discouraged.

- Setbacks and Building Placement

1. Views of ridgetops, natural systems and grasslands should be preserved as parcels are developed.
2. Setbacks should be maintained in accordance with current zoning and the General Plan Open Space Element in order to preserve views of distant ridgelines and to protect riparian corridors. Variances from required setbacks should be avoided.
3. Most commercial development in the town center along Arnold Drive lies close to the road. This pattern encourages pedestrian and community activity along the street, contributes to Glen Ellen's village atmosphere, and creates a distinctive environment announcing the town center. New commercial development in this area should maintain this setback adjacent to Arnold where possible and not in conflict with circulation patterns.
4. Hilltop and ridgeline siting of homes and structures shall conform to applicable requirements set forth in the General Plan Open Space Element.

- Elevations

1. The mass of new structures should be softened by landscaping or lessened by small-scale elements such as windows, panels, entrances and other detail features to avoid monotony in design.
2. Features such as garage doors and windowless facades should be minimized along Arnold Drive. The visual impact of garages may be reduced by orientation away from the street or by screening with native vegetation.
3. Breaks in street frontage provide opportunities for visual connections with Glen Ellen's natural surroundings, and maintain the traditional rhythm of development. This separation between buildings should be incorporated into new development.
4. The height of new structures in the town center should not exceed two stories above street level.
5. New structures visible from Arnold Drive in the north and south entrance areas should not exceed two stories in height. Excavation and use of dormers may be appropriate to create additional living space.

- Building Materials and Construction

1. Simple hip and gable roofs predominate in the area and should be encouraged for new structures. Flat roofs should be strongly discouraged.
2. The exterior color of buildings should generally resemble the existing natural environment in hue and value.
3. Indigenous materials such as wood and stone should be used for exterior finishes. Stucco and structural brick found in the town center are also recommended. Other materials such as aluminum siding and brick veneers should not be recommended.
4. Window and door frames should be at least 1" wide and of a traditional scale. Narrow, silver aluminum frames should be discouraged.
5. Evidence of the craftsmanship which contributes to Glen Ellen's historic, intimate, and cared for character should be encouraged.
6. Contemporary art and sculpture, particularly by Glen Ellen residents, should be incorporated with new development to enhance the town's unique character.
7. Entry into Glen Ellen's town center should be enhanced by establishing attractive visual features at the end of Warm Springs Road and near the west side of the Jack London Saloon.
8. Future expansion or modification of the Fire Station should preserve and reinforce its civic image.

- Parking/ Circulation

1. Parking for commercial areas should have minimal frontage on Arnold Drive, and should be located behind buildings whenever possible.
2. Development should provide on-site parking according to existing county standards. Any waiver from these requirements should be only for demonstrated public benefit.
3. Service parking areas should be avoided at building fronts wherever possible, and should not interrupt vehicular or pedestrian traffic.
4. Servicing should be accommodated at the rear of commercial and retail buildings. Where rear service entries are not provided, parking areas should be designated for service use during a specified time.

5. Continuous pedestrian paths should be provided on both sides of Arnold Drive from the fire station south through the town center to the extent possible.
6. Pedestrian/bicycle access should be established between the town center and Sonoma Valley Regional Park, to the extent practical.

- Landscaping

1. New landscaping along Arnold Drive should be compatible with the existing vegetation in the various areas of Glen Ellen.
2. Tree planting should be encouraged on private residential lots. Formal street tree planting along public rights of way should be discouraged. Large native canopy trees should be encouraged, providing overhang onto public rights of way. Where public spaces/private open spaces exist, informal tree planting should be encouraged.
3. Where unpleasant views of private lots are present, or where uses are incompatible, buffer planting using informal massing of native trees and shrubs should be encouraged.
4. Where development occurs close to the roadside, adequate screening using native plant massing similar to the existing landscaping should be provided.
5. Existing healthy plant material, including trees, should be preserved to the extent possible where on-street parking occurs.

- Lighting

1. Pedestrian lighting should not be placed in regular patterns. Lighting for pedestrian paths should be incorporated into building facades where possible.
2. Lighting for walks and parking areas should be small in scale and used to illuminate signs, displays and pedestrian paths. High intensity lighting in parking lots and along roadsides should be discouraged.
3. Historical or ornamental lighting should be encouraged.

4. Lighting should be cast down on paths; care should be taken to avoid a daylight effect.
5. Floodlighting and intense lighting of expansive areas should be discouraged in areas visible from Arnold Drive.

- Signage

1. The commercial complexes at the south end of town should retain attached signs.
2. Billboards and large freestanding advertising signs and structures should be avoided along roadways.

- Historical Preservation

1. Distinguishing architectural features presently covered or in disrepair should be restored as much as possible.
2. Buildings, features and artifacts that are reminiscent of Glen Ellen's past should be retained where possible. Special attention should not be drawn to them; however they should remain as reminders of the community's history.

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS, COUNTY OF SONOMA, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, ADOPTING A NEGATIVE DECLARATION, APPROVING AN AMENDMENT TO CHAPTER 26 OF THE SONOMA COUNTY CODE (ZONING ORDINANCE), AND ADOPTING DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN GUIDELINES FOR THE GLEN ELLEN AREA.

WHEREAS, the Sonoma County Planning Commission considered an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to establish development and design guidelines for the Glen Ellen area; and

WHEREAS, the Sonoma County Planning Commission reviewed and considered the Glen Ellen Development and Design Guidelines; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the provisions of law, the Sonoma County Planning Commission conducted duly-noticed public hearings on the proposals on August 2 and 16, and October 4, 1990, at which time all interested persons were given an opportunity to be heard; and

WHEREAS, the Sonoma County Planning Commission has reviewed and considered the information contained in the initial study and negative declaration prepared in accordance with CEQA State and County guidelines; and

WHEREAS, the Planning Commission adopted Resolution No. 90-134, recommending that the Board of Supervisors 1) adopt the Negative Declaration; 2) amend the Zoning Ordinance as described in Exhibit "1" of the staff report; and 3) adopt the Glen Ellen Development and Design Guidelines set forth in the staff report; and

WHEREAS, in accordance with the provisions of law, the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors conducted a duly-noticed public hearing on October 30, 1990 at which time all interested persons were given an opportunity to be heard; and

WHEREAS, the Board directed staff to prepare additional project alternatives for its consideration on November 14, 1990; and

WHEREAS, the Board of Supervisors has reviewed and considered the Planning Commission's recommendation and the information contained in the initial study prepared in accordance with CEQA State and County guidelines, and has determined that there will be no significant environmental effects resulting from this project; and

NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the Board of Supervisors hereby 1) adopts the Negative Declaration; 2) approves an amendment to the Zoning Ordinance to add ARTICLE XLIV, Section 26-360 et. seq. as described in Exhibit "1" attached; and 3) adopts the Glen Ellen Development and Design Guidelines set forth in the staff report and described in Exhibit "2" attached.

The foregoing resolution was introduced by Supervisor Nicholas.

SUPERVISORS:

NICHOLAS: aye HARBERSON: aye SMITH: aye CARPENTER: aye ESPOSTI: absent

AYES: 4 NOES: 0 ABSENT: 1 ABSTAIN: \_\_\_\_\_

SO ORDERED.

Text revisions to the Glen Ellen Development and Design Guidelines are as follows:

1) Page 6 - Objective A.1 should read:

"Ensure that the size, scale and intensity of all developments are consistent and compatible with the character of Glen Ellen."

2) Page 7 - D.1 and D.2 should be combined into one objective to read:

"Preserve and enhance significant views and vistas."

3) Page 12 - Policy 1. under Open Space and Natural Systems should read:

"Consider providing areas for passive and active recreation in commercial developments."

4) Page 14 - Guideline 1. under Walkways should read:

"Concrete paving should be encouraged along commercial building frontages in the town center."

5) Page 14 - Guideline 2., second sentence under Walkways should read:

"Paving should not be stylish, but should resemble existing character and form."

6) Page 17 - Guideline 5. under Parking/Circulation should be deleted.